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PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE SECOND EMPIRE.

XI.—THE WARNING OF SADOWA.

BY ALBERT D. VANDAM, AUTHOR OF "AN ENGLISHMAN IN PARIS," "MY PARIS NOTE-BOOK," ETC., ETC.

"A FEW nights ago there was a scene at the Tuileries more dramatic, perhaps, than any in the most powerful of Alexandre Dumas' historical melodramas. The château was wrapt in silence, for the Empress is away in England or Scotland, and the Emperor was sitting in his own room deeply engrossed with the second volume of *L'Histoire de Jules César*, which is just out. Suddenly, one of the gentlemen-in-waiting, the Marquis de Caux, I believe, enters the Emperor's room; but the Emperor pays no attention, he scarcely looks up. 'What is it?' he asks almost impatiently. 'The Prince de Metternich, sire,' is the answer. The Emperor half rises from his chair and turns very pale, as if with a presentiment of disaster, and before the Ambassador is fairly in the room the presentiment is verified. 'I am sorry to inform your Majesty that the battle of Sadowa, which was fought to-day, has been lost by us,' he says rather more calmly than the Emperor himself. In another moment several horses, which are always kept ready harnessed at night, were put in, and Rouher, Fleury, Drouyn de Lhuys and Randon sent for. The Master of the Horse and the Minister for War reached the Tuileries within a second of one another. The Emperor, who is phlegmatic enough at ordinary times, invariably loses that phlegm in Fleury's presence. 'We have gained Venice for others, we have lost the Rhine for ourselves!' he exclaimed, before the door had been fairly closed behind his most trusty adviser, handing him at the same time the telegram announcing the Austrian defeat. 'We have lost nothing yet, sire,' remarked

Fleury, glancing at the paper, 'On the contrary; now or never is your chance to reconstruct the map of Europe.' The sentence had barely left his lips when the door opened once more to admit Randon. He had heard what Fleury said. 'We are not ready,' he remarked, addressing Fleury directly and summarily saluting the Emperor. Then turning to the sovereign, 'Your Majesty is well aware that I have not got thirty thousand troops fit to take the field at such a short notice.' 'Thirty thousand troops!' repeated Fleury with his usual dash; 'thirty thousand troops! That's more than sufficient to mask the absence of those that are not ready.' The Emperor shook his head. His eternal want of decision at the critical moment came strong upon him. 'Ah,' he sighed, 'if the Empress were but here.' For once in a way I agree with him; if the Empress had been there, she would have counselled a headlong war with Prussia there and then, and I fancy it would have been the right thing to do. In three months, in six months, in a year, or a couple of years—for that struggle must inevitably come now—it will be too late. Nay, the longer it is delayed the worse it will be for France in the end, for those who know best aver that Prussia is gaining strength every day. Sadowa has effaced the glory of Solferino, Prussia has proved her single-handed superiority over Austria in Bohemia, just as France proved it seven years ago in Lombardy. If anything, the proof is in favor of King Wilhelm's legions, for Victor Emmanuel's troops did, after all, count for something. Practically, though, the two nations stand confessed equals on the battlefield with regard to one adversary, and that one the military power hitherto deemed too strong for attack by her latest victor who for years submitted to great humiliations at her hands.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken in the temper of the French, they will not relish that real or supposed equality; it will rankle in their minds, and they will hold Napoleon III. directly responsible for it. There, I feel, lies the rock ahead. The French will not be satisfied until they have proved to the world at large that Jena and not Leipzig or Waterloo was the test of their military supremacy to Prussia. They will not rest until they have measured conclusions with the descendants of the armies of Frederic the Great once more, and that rather than the prospect of the acquisition of territory on the banks of the Rhine will be

the real cause of the next contest between them and the Teuton. I feel convinced that no diplomatic skill will avert that contest, unless Prussia would submit to the most extravagant demands on the part of France. Sadowa, to my mind, has put an end to the probability of such concessions, if ever they were seriously entertained by King Wilhelm since he has had two such men as Helmuth von Moltke and Otto von Bismarck by his side.

“ I like and admire Napoleon III. as much as any man, but I am not blind to the fact that it would want a Richelieu and a Jomini to co-operate with him in order to withstand successfully the combination arrayed against him. There is not a Metternich or a Talleyrand in the whole of France, let alone a Richelieu; if there be a Jomini, he is carefully kept away from the Court by the dancing and swaggering clique who maintain that *le courage fait tout*. And worse than all, Bazaine is in Mexico. I am told by those who are competent to express an opinion, that he and Niel are the only two among the marshals who can lay claim to the name of strategists in the serious acceptation of the term ; although those same informants do not hesitate to aver that there are at least half-a-dozen officers of lesser grades that are superior to both. The competent ones are, however, systematically ostracised by the Court party, which though devoured by jealousy of one another does not even condescend to be jealous of these. They are simply ignored. The jealousy, intriguing, and caballing are reserved for those who cannot be ignored ; the result of all this is an all-pervading spirit of meanness which it would be impossible to describe and still more impossible to impress upon the outsider but for some startling proofs in individual instances. A lawyer would call them *pièces de conviction morales*.

“ Some time after the fall of Sebastopol, its eminent defender paid a visit to France and met with a distinguished welcome at the Tuileries. When taking leave of the Emperor, he mentioned casually that on his way home he was going to spend a day at the camp of Châlons to see General Raoult, the chief of the staff. Noticing the look of surprise on the Emperor's face, Todtleben explained, ‘ During the late war, sir, General Raoult was my most formidable adversary.’ It wanted a foreign general to draw the Emperor's attention to an officer of his army whose attainments were common talk in every war-office of Europe except that of France

herself, an officer whom Queen Victoria had delighted to honor by conferring upon him the Order of the Bath, who bore the insignia of the Medjidi, of Saint Maurice and St. Lazare, the military medals of Sardinia and England, who during the siege itself was made a Knight-Commander of the Legion of Honor. Just, nay, generous to a fault, the Emperor repaired his oversight in a little while by naming General Raoult chief of the staff of the Imperial Guards.

“Did the Emperor point out afterwards to his Minister for War that it is his most sacred duty to enlighten him on the merits of his officers? It is more than doubtful, for there is nothing Napoleon III. dislikes so much as being compelled to reprimand. He generally errs the other way. He endeavors as far as lies in his power, to remove ignorance and incompetence from their active spheres, but his method is, to say the least, curious. General Forey, who wasted many months in Mexico, and showed a lamentable want of decision and an utter absence of military skill before Puebla, had to be recalled. The merest sub-lieutenant could have pointed out the flagrant mistakes he had committed. The Emperor could think of no better way of removing him from his command than by making him a marshal. Here is an extract from the Emperor’s letter dated exactly three years ago, which Forey has been showing everywhere. ‘It has afforded me much happiness to hear of the entry of my troops into Mexico; and now I think that all serious resistance will be at an end. By the time my letter shall reach you, Mexico will have been in our power for three months, and the military expedition may be considered as terminated. Under those circumstances, I think it useless to prolong your stay in Mexico. A marshal of France is too big a personage to be allowed to worry about intrigues and administrative details. Hence you have my authority to delegate your powers to General Bazaine the moment you think fit, and to return to France to enjoy your success and the legitimate glory you have won.’

“Of course, the non-recall of Bazaine when he was raised to the dignity of marshal is explained by Forey’s friends on the plausible theory that since then, affairs in Mexico have gone from bad to worse, but I and many like me who are neither Bazaine’s friends nor Forey’s enemies know the difference of calibre between these two.

“And then that magnificent sentence, ‘A marshal of France is too big a personage to be allowed to worry about intrigues and administrative details.’ Ye shades of Davoust and Ney, who worried themselves, without being asked, about the soldiers’ tin kettles and the washing of their feet. And Bismarck, as big a personage as any marshal of France, and who, Körner told me yesterday, worried himself in the thick of the campaign about his soldiers’ cigars, and made his wife worry too, while he, Bismarck, was sleeping on the flagstones. The present marshals are too big for that sort of thing; they do not care a single jot about the soldier’s camp kettle, or about his cleanliness. The general of division takes his cue from the marshal, the general of brigade takes his cue from the general of division, and so on, until in the end the barrack-room becomes an unspeakable thing, and the soldier, in spite of his outward smartness, a far from pleasant being to come into close contact with.”

The above note or notes—for from internal evidence I came to the conclusion long ago that the whole was not written at one sitting—belongs to the collection from which I have so often drawn in these chapters.

The stupefaction produced on the Emperor by the unexpected revelation of Prussia’s military supremacy over Austria—I could, if required, prove that it was altogether unexpected—was not of long duration. In October, 1866, he instituted a grand commission to examine the question of reorganizing the French army. Only those who lived in Paris in those days can conceive an idea of the formidable opposition, of the blind antagonism, the project met with from the very outset.

“Give a dog a bad name and it will stick to him.” During the last few years I have been so persistently accused of systematic hostility against France both by the English and the French themselves that I have grown absolutely callous to the accusation. Nevertheless, I should be sorry to write one line of unfavorable comment on a matter of such importance as the patriotism of a nation on insufficient proof. The opposition to Napoleon III.’s scheme of army reform was, however, prompted by such mean and personal motives on the part of some deputies that silence on the subject would be more blameable to my mind than outspokenness.

The sayings and doings of the Peace Society generally inspire

me with an irrepressible desire to throw politeness to the winds and to call its members names ; yet there is no one more alive to the hardships of conscription than I. If the opposition to Napoleon's contemplated army bill had sprung from a sincere wish to diminish those hardships no one would or could have withheld his sympathy, though even then the *Salus Patriæ suprema lex* would have acted as a damper to one's admiration. But neither the *conscrip*t himself, nor his mother, sisters, and sweetheart, all of whom suffer most from his enforced absence in times of peace, from his non-return in times of war, occupied the thoughts of the deputy. The relatives for whose feelings the deputy showed the deepest concern were those who suffered least, namely, the father and uncle of the ploughboy or young workman. And for a very good reason : the father and uncle could mar or make the deputy at the next general election ; that is, could deprive him of his snug stipend of at least £500 per annum, or secure him the undisturbed possession of it for so many years. I will probably return to the subject in the next chapter ; for the present suffice it to say that this hostility of the majority even while the bill was only in incubation produced the most disastrous effect outside France in regard to her hitherto preponderant influence in European affairs. To restore that preponderance, a second *Coup d'Etat* was necessary in order to show the world at large that the Louis Napoleon of 1851 had not altogether ceased to be ; but the frequent want of decision that marked the latter years of the Emperor's reign, and had already produced two formidable errors as far as France's prestige was concerned, was fast developing into a chronic disease, which the approaching opening of that "damnable exhibition" was not calculated to remove, even temporarily.

For by that time "the invitations to the feast" were out, and had been eagerly accepted by the crowned heads of Europe. Joshua would have been equally glad to get such an invitation from the kings of the land of Canaan. Twelve years before that, Marshal Vaillant had expressed his opinion on the futility of trying to promote international friendships and conciliating rival sovereigns by such means. "When the other one [Napoleon I.] gave them entertainments and theatrical performances, it was on their ground and not in France ; they paid the expenses, and not he."

Napoleon III., I fancy, knew the Parisians better in one respect than did either his uncle or any sovereign before him (the nephew). He had probably come to the conclusion that in default of incessant victories the Parisians' good will to their ruler was largely dependent on the latter's ability and efforts to provide them with magnificent public shows and court pageants. I doubt if Napoleon III., had he decided to be crowned or to crown himself, would have gone to Rheims like Charles X. and some of his forbears, or, like Napoleon I., hesitated between the capital and a provincial city as the scene for such coronation. Instead of taking the Comédie-Française to Erfurth to act before a *parterre* of kings, Napoleon III. invited the *parterre* of kings to the Rue Le Peletier, knowing that he would please his metropolitan subjects and still trusting that he might dazzle his royal and imperial visitors. The experiment of twelve years previously had been so eminently successful in that respect, and the exhibition of 1867 was to eclipse that of 1855 as well as the twelve others which had opened their portals during the nearly seven decades that had gone by since the "Temple of Industry" had been inaugurated on that same Champ de Mars.

And truly, results seemed to justify the Emperor's expectations. At no period of modern history had any capital of Europe offered its hospitality to so many exalted personages within so short a period. Three emperors (for the Sultan of Turkey is styled an Imperial ruler, I believe); seven reigning kings, three of whom were officially accompanied by their consorts; nine grand dukes; two archdukes; two dozen princes of the blood, among whom there were at least a half-dozen heirs apparent; princesses, grand-duchesses, dukes and duchesses by the score; all these were calculated to give Paris in particular, and France in general, an intoxicating idea of their Emperor's power. Did France dream at that moment that among those visitors some had come to spy the martial nakedness of the land, however carefully hidden behind a gorgeous array—an almost too gorgeous array—of glinting cuirass and resplendent gold lace? Did one visitor in particular, as the French maintain till this day, have his cupidity aroused by the unmistakable evidences of material prosperity, in such curious contrast to the lack of power to guard that prosperity by force of arms? I cannot say. But here

is a story for the authenticity of which I will vouch, although the source from which it is drawn is not the usual one.

The King of Prussia, accompanied by Bismarck, Moltke, and others, arrived in Paris on June 5, 1866. The Elysée being occupied by his nephew, the Czar of Russia, King Wilhelm took up his quarters at the Prussian Embassy in the Rue de Lille.

On June 8 the Municipality gave a ball at the Hôtel de Ville in honor of the Imperial and Royal visitors, who as a matter of course were received by M. Haussmann, the Prefect of the Seine. In shaking hands with Haussmann, King Wilhelm is reported to have said : " Monsieur le Préfet, I have not been in Paris since 1814. I find it very changed indeed." Next morning, Haussmann accompanied the King, Bismarck, and Moltke to the heights of Montmartre, where the whole of the city of Paris lies practically at one's feet. " That's where I was encamped in 1814, M. le Préfet," said the King, pointing in the direction of Romainville. " Yes, sire, but there's a fort there now," replied Haussmann.

This is the story in full. That those two sentences of the King would have been better left unsaid under the circumstances no one would care to deny ; but to build upon them a theory of sudden, invincible cupidity or ambition which nothing would satisfy but the possession, if for ever so short a time, of the magnificent city that lay outspread at his feet, would be too extravagant. And yet, if such invincible cupidity or ambition had suddenly obtruded itself, where would have been the wonder ? For years Napoleon III. had striven and plotted about that Rhine frontier, the inordinate desire for which on the part of the French had nearly led to a war twenty-seven years before Wilhelm of Prussia stood on the heights of Montmartre. Do the French imagine that Wilhelm's head was a sieve, that Jena, the humiliation of his father and mother by Napoleon I. had simply run through that head without leaving traces there ? Do they imagine that Nicholas Becker wrote his *Hymne am Rhein* and Max Schneckenburger his *Wacht am Rhein* without provocation ?

I myself am inclined to agree with the author who said, " The journey to France of Moltke and his royal master in 1867 was not a pleasure trip, but a downright military reconnaissance." This in itself would prove that the idea of a possible, nay, a probable war with France had suggested itself to the minds of

the three men who were mainly responsible for the issue of the struggle. I am confirmed in my belief by a scene I witnessed some seventy-two hours before King Wilhelm, Moltke, Bismarck, and Haussmann stood on the heights of Montmartre. It was at the review held in honor of the sovereigns at Longchamps on the 6th June. Thanks to my uncle's numerous friends in the army, we had two tickets; one had been given us by General Fleury, the other by the Emperor himself. We were placed on the enclosure right in front of the imperial stand, where the Empress, with her son by her side and surrounded by a brilliant suite, was seated. At two o'clock the Emperor, the Czar, and the King of Prussia, followed by their respective staffs, appeared on the ground. It would want a great word-painter to describe the spectacle, and I shall not attempt it. The Austrian and English officers in their white and scarlet uniforms closed the procession, and then about a score of yards behind them came a solitary figure, also in white and on horseback. He was riding very slowly, much slower than the rest, and seemed to scan every regiment as he passed it, as if to impress deeply on his memory its number, its numerical strength, its probable potentiality. "That's not an Austrian," said my uncle, who in spite of his strong field-glass was not able to distinguish very clearly. "I wonder who it is?" He had to repeat the latter part of his sentence, for I, too, was watching the figure closely. It was the second time I had seen it within a twelvemonth. The first time was on the evening of Friday, the 29th June, 1866, at a window in the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin. At the very moment it appeared at that window, a clap of thunder rent the air and a flash of lightning made the sky lurid. "This is heaven's salvo in honor of our victory, boys," it exclaimed, its voice being distinctly heard above the roar of the crowd.

"I wonder who it is?" repeated my uncle, nudging me in the side with his elbow. "That," I answered; "that's Bismarck."

"..." remarked my uncle, lowering his glass for a second. He did not say another word for at least an hour, but I noticed that he kept watching the white figure.

"I wonder," he said very slowly on our way home, "whether the sixty thousand troops assembled to-day have hidden the nakedness behind them. Fleury averred that it only wanted half that

number. I wonder whether that white figure is to be hood-winked in that way."

He scarcely spoke for the remainder of the day, but seemed lost in deep thought. The reader may remember that on his return from that review, Alexander II. was fired at by Berezwowski, in the Bois de Boulogne. The bullet only struck the mouth of the horse of M. Raimbault, the Empress's equerry, who was riding by the side of the Imperial carriage. The jury of the Seine made the would-be assassin a present of his life. It has been stated, not once, but a hundred times, in print that this act of clemency, perhaps, deprived France of Russia's alliance in 1870.

To those who knew Alexander II. best, the statement constitutes not only an insult to his memory, but is ridiculous besides. It marks the same train of thought that credited Wilhelm of Prussia with nothing but cupidity at the sight of Paris in all her glory.

But on that June 6th, and for two months afterwards, such thoughts found no crevice in the minds of the majority of Frenchmen. The intoxicating idea of their power as attested by the presence of all those exalted guests left no room for any other. I said the majority. My uncles were not French, and if they had been they would not have belonged to the majority.

On the evening of that day, when the papers came out with their glowing accounts, my younger grand-uncle, who, as I said, had scarcely opened his lips since our return home, quietly got up and walked to a bookcase, from which he took a Shakespeare. He slowly turned the leaves until he came to *Macbeth*. "That's the future quotation for the King of Prussia, Bismarck, and Moltke," he said. Then in an impressive voice he read the first line of the second scene of Act II.—"That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold."

He spoke no more that evening until he bade us "good night."

ALBERT D. VANDAM.

(*To be continued.*)